

MEETING NOTES

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, May 21, 2002

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

PLACE: COG, 777 North Capitol Street, NE
First Floor, Room 1

CHAIR: Heather Wallenstrom
Virginia Department of Transportation

**VICE-
CHAIRS:** Michael Jackson
District Division of Transportation,
Jim Sebastian
Maryland Department of Transportation

1. General Introductions.

Participants introduced themselves.

2. Review of the Minutes of the March 19, 2002 Meeting

Minutes were approved.

3. Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study Wendy Klancher, COG

Wendy Klancher discussed the study. In Fall of 2000 the TPB adopted a long-range plan. Simultaneously, a study was authorized to study future land use and accessibility under different scenarios. There will be at least two land use/transportation scenarios, which will extend to 2025. The scenarios will account for the effects of transportation facilities on land use. Scenarios have to be very specific, including location of facilities and development, costs, and some indication of funding sources. The regional congestion management program will be part of every scenario. Bicycle and pedestrian improvements are part of the congestion management

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program, and have been analyzed at TERMS, Transportation Emissions Reductions Measures.

Heather Wallenstrom asked what the purpose of the study was. Wendy replied that it was a way to inform the TPB about the consequences of different transportation/land use scenarios for the region. No recommendations would be made. Michael Farrell asked if the study would measure the transportation impacts of connectivity and pedestrian facilities. Wendy replied that the study would not be that detailed. Andy added that the question of looking at connectivity and bicycle and pedestrian facilities was difficult to analyze because most pedestrian trips are intra-zonal, and hence do not get picked up by the model. It is a technical limitation of the model, not an unwillingness to consider the impacts of pedestrian-friendly design. Heather asked about the study timeline and possible opportunities for input. Wendy replied that the scenario development would take place in the Fall of 2002, and final report to the TPB would be presented in the Fall of 2003. Michael asked how bicycle and pedestrian facilities could fit into this type of study. Wendy replied that those bicycle or pedestrian facilities analyzed as TERMS would be considered. Andy Meese added that in some areas, such as the District of Columbia, the Traffic Analysis Zones would be small enough to “see” some pedestrian and bicycle movement, but that in the larger zones typical of suburban areas most pedestrian and bicycle travel was likely to be intrazonal and not accounted for in the model.

4. Bike to Work Day Event Report
Mark Hersey, COG

Mark Hersey discussed Bike to Work Day, which took place on May 3. Mark thanked WABA for a successful event, which doubled last year’s participation to over 2,000 at eleven pit stops. Four of the five television stations covered the events at Freedom Plaza. Sponsors included City Bikes, DC Lottery, and CommuterPage.com. Pepco, GSA, and Fresh Fields assisted. Participation doubled with only half the cash sponsorship last year’s event enjoyed. Wrap up meetings concluded that Gaithersburg would likely be a new pit stop. The kick-off meeting for next year’s event will take place towards the end of December. Next year, the sponsorship solicitation needs to be stepped up. Jim Sebastian thanked Commuter Connections for organizing Bike to Work Day, and making such a success of it. Mark pointed out that many people rode in to work who did not register for the event.

5. Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety Outreach Campaign
Michael Farrell, Heather Wallenstrom

COG is applying to the Maryland Office of Highway Safety for \$100,000 in highway safety funds, VDOT is applying for an additional \$100,000 in Safety Funds from the State of Virginia, and the District of Columbia has expressed some willingness to provide funds. We will learn whether or not the application to Maryland is successful in July.

The most important new development is an understanding between COG and Montgomery County. Montgomery County has \$100,000 in hand to hire a consultant, Design House, to

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design a publicity campaign. We have met with representatives from Montgomery County, and agreed that the 402 funds for which VDOT and COG are currently applying would be used primarily to pay for ad time, while Montgomery County could use most of its funds to pay for campaign development. This arrangement will save time and money, and avoid the creation of duplicate ad campaigns. Montgomery County's funds are available immediately, so design work can start right away, while the 402 funds will not be available until October, when they can be used to pay for the advertising time. The Safety Task Force met on Thursday, April 25 at COG with representatives from Montgomery County and agreed in principle to adopt the Montgomery County consultant. Jim Sebastian suggested that the meeting between Montgomery County's consultant and the Safety Task Force take place at COG, to reinforce the regional nature of this program.

Harry Cepeda of the District of Columbia asked that this program deal with handicapped accessibility issues. Michael Farrell replied that the ads were aimed at the general public, so it would be difficult to address handicapped design issues. Jim Sebastian said that Design House was likely to produce materials featuring handicapped people. Michael replied that it had been agreed early on that this campaign would be focused on teaching the general how to deal with the system as it exists, rather than teaching engineers how to improve designs for pedestrian access. Fred Shaffer expressed dismay with the state of facilities for pedestrians and the handicapped, who can be observed in wheelchairs in the travel lane.

Gerry Miller suggested that this effort be brought to the attention of the TPB, to get its blessing. The TPB will probably embrace it, but they have to be informed. The TPB has been told that something of this nature was in the works, but now we have a lot more specifics. We want to avoid a situation in which TPB Board members learn about it first from the Washington Post. Gerry suggested that we mail something to the TPB Technical Committee for its June 7 Meeting, and present to the TPB Board thereafter.

One minor glitch is that Montgomery County put nothing in its RFP to Design House for bicycles, but some of the 402 funds could be used to make up that deficiency.

Anyone wishing to have input into the effort should get involved soon since the design effort would go forward over the summer. The more participation the better.

6. Bike Plan Work Group Update

Michael Farrell, Heather Wallenstrom

The regional bike plan work group met this morning. It was decided based on past meeting that text should be minimized, and design standards dealt with by referring to existing standards such as AASHTO. Paper plans themselves are inaccessible and become out of date rapidly. Where we felt we could add the most value was to add a queryable, on-line project database, hosted on COG's web site. We would have an intranet of people involved in those projects, who are allowed to enter modifications into the database. COG staff would review those modifications monthly, so we would have an up-to-date project database. With an additional \$7500, the database could be linked to mapping software. The user could select

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projects of the most interest to him or her, based on any of a number of characteristics, and create a map of projects showing those characteristics. Any changes in the database would of course be reflected in the maps. The Safety Task Force also discussed nominating a top ten bicycle and pedestrian projects for funding. A top ten list would be a good publicity tool, and it is something the TPB Board has expressed interest in. Fred Shaffer asked how large the database would be. Michael replied that the database should be large, including everything that is included in the local plans. That list can then be parsed out as needed by different criteria, such as projects that are funded, and top priorities for the region. Jim Sebastian had about a hundred projects in his draft plan. Such a list is useful to citizens, because it allows them to see what is already planned. Jim said that for him, who has struggled with it for years, this solves all our problems. We have a plan that is out of date and has no sense of priorities. An on-line database will be comprehensive and up-to-date, while the annual priority list will give a sense of what the regional priorities are, for the benefit of the TPB Board and the general public. The on-line aspect will make both elements work. A paper plan can be, and usually is wrong, but it seldom gets noticed. If something incorrect is placed on line, it gets noticed, and gets corrected, by the people who have the information. The database will make it easier to track what is happening with the top priorities, allowing fast status reports to the TPB board or anyone else who is interested.

Heather asked that we put together a thumbnail sketch of how the planning and funding process works on the local and regional level.

A draft plan should be prepared by the end of the year. For all our emphasis on the on-line features, the TPB still needs a paper plan to endorse.

The paper plan will also be on-line, and it will probably include static PDF maps. These maps won't be updated, and they are not queriable. With ARC-IMS you can see maps that contain only the features that interest you.

Action Items:

- Finalize design of the database
- Develop a summary of the planning process, both regionally and locally

7. Proposed 2002 Bike/Ped Subcommittee Work Plan
Heather Wallenstrom, VDOT

Heather presented her proposed workplan, consisting of recurring items that we should remember to pay attention to. We should exchange a contact list, so we can get in touch with each other. We should stay on top of the TERM process, and think about TERM measures in advance. Heather suggested that progress reports be provided, in writing, on all the major studies in the region. Michael agreed that it was good to have such updates in writing.

8. Regional Bike Racks

Of the bike racks distributed in the region a few years ago, VDOT installed all of its allocation. MDOT gave its racks to the local jurisdictions, not all of whom installed all of its racks. Michael has a list of who received racks, but hasn't found out who has still has racks left over, and how many. It is important to get these numbers eventually since a new regional bike rack TERM is not likely to be adopted until we can show what happened to the old ones.

Action Item

- Get the numbers on racks installed and racks remaining.

9. Proposed Action to ban trails in Stream Valleys

Gail Tait-Nouri, Montgomery County DPWT

Opponents to trails in Montgomery County often cite environmental reasons for opposing trails, particularly the Matthew Henson Trail. In Gail's opinion, the informal paths that develop in the absence of a formal trail are more damaging than a formal trail. The Muddy Branch Trail has been partially forced onto the road due to community opposition. People opposed to these two major trails have backed proposed legislation to ban trails in stream valleys or on steep slopes. The legislation would not affect roads in stream valleys. Since most of the potential trail corridors in the County are wholly or partially within stream valleys, it would largely halt trail construction in Montgomery County. The Parks and Planning Department is not supportive of this legislation. The Sierra Club of Montgomery County favors it. Park and Planning is doing less clearing of trees and brush in an effort to meet environmental concerns. . .

The group agreed that such legislation would be fatal to nearly all trail construction. At the extreme, it could ban a sidewalk on a bridge crossing a stream valley. The air quality and stormwater benefits of bicycle and pedestrian travel compared to auto travel should be emphasized. The impact of hard surface trails on stormwater runoff in the watershed is miniscule. Stormwater runoff regulations often do not distinguish between a parking lot, which produces a concentrated flow, and a trail, which distributes its runoffs across miles of absorptive swale. However, the impact on the wildlife habitat in the stream valley immediately adjacent to the trail may not be. Jim remarked that such impacts should be evaluated on a case by case basis, but a blanket ban does not allow for any such weighing of costs and benefits. The proposed ban would obliterate the County Parks and Greenways Plan.

10. Other Member Jurisdiction Updates

Fairfax County Trails map was discussed. Montgomery County has a new bike route map, which is available on-line. Fred Shaffer is working on a Prince Georges County Bike Plan. Route 193 will receive continuous sidewalks and bike lanes. The Citizens Advisory Committee

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approved the bike lanes. Allen Muchnick announced that VDOT would be having public hearings on its proposal to widen the beltway.

The Virginia Assembly has dealt with a number of bicycle related bills. A bill was passed allowing Fairfax City and Loudoun County to increase fines for failing to yield to pedestrians. VDOT is now explicitly allowed to pursue bicycle and pedestrian projects separate from highway projects, which they were not prohibited from doing before. The Commonwealth Transportation Board is required to create a state-wide pedestrian policy providing for access to public facilities. An attempt to set aside some safety funds for bicycles and pedestrians failed. A Segway scooter bill passed, limiting its speed to 15 mph, and providing for its treatment as an electric bicycle. Maryland is treating the Segway as a pedestrian. The Segway handles more like a bicycle than a pedestrian, so the Virginia approach found favor with the committee.

The District of Columbia is launching a small pedestrian safety campaign focusing on high-crash intersections. The District has hired a pedestrian coordinator, Harry Cepeda, who was introduced to the group.

Adjourned.